

NIH Labor-Management Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 15, 2002

Attendees: Tony Clifford, Howard Hochman, Clyde Bartz, Michael Laven, Chris Pyles, Charles Palmer, Mike Showers, Alberta Bourn, Rita Sweeney, Linda Tarlow, Shirley Flottum, Richard Laubach and Barry Kevin.

Facilitator: Fern Kaufman

Old Business: Minutes of the Tuesday, March 18, 2002 meeting were reviewed and were approved with one correction as noted by Mr. Clifford.

New Business:

NIH Parking Policy: A continuation of the discussion of this topic from the previous meeting was conducted. Neither Mr. Hayden nor Mr. Freeman were able to attend the meeting. A discussion ensued concerning the definitions of the various contractors and their parking privileges. Mr. Kevin noted that Mr. Hayden would not be available to attend a meeting in the near future, and that the new parking policy was nearing completion. Several related issues, such as the construction of several multi-level parking garages and the construction of the new Bio-terrorism center were expected to impact the parking problem. The council had many questions, but no one was able to answer them. The council requested that Ms. Stella Serras-Fiotes be invited to attend the next meeting, as she is the head of the office that proposes and approves the policy. Mr. Kevin will invite her to the next meeting.

Leave Briefing: Ms. Shirley Flottum, NIH OHRM, presented a briefing on the various leave programs available to Federal Government employees. Handouts were distributed. The briefing covered leave programs including: the Leave Transfer Program, Family and Medical Leave, Sick Leave for Family Care or Bereavement Purposes, Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition, Bone Marrow or Organ Donor Leave, Leave and Work Scheduling Flexibilities Available for Adoption, Leave and Work Scheduling Flexibilities Available for Childbirth, Excused Absences for Preventive Health Screenings, and the OHRM Leave Guide for Civilian Employees. The leave guide is available online at the OHRM website. Several recent leave problems were discussed and the view shared by many is that the vast majority of leave problems can be resolved when the Supervisor, Administrative Officer, Timekeeper and Employee work together. While many of the problems are related to the disparity between the payslip and ITAS, the new version of ITAS software (due out next month) will generate a report identifying any difference in leave balances between ITAS and the payslip. Ms. Flottum stated she is available to provide assistance to anyone who needs it, and can be reached at 301-402-7599.

Impact on agency staff due to the implementation of new technology: Mr. Laubach discussed the recent events at Stone Street concerning the elimination of numerous printing/reproduction positions as a result of transitioning to electronic grants (eGrants) application processes. In the past the printing operation was profitable, but with the implementation of the new eGrants program they lost 50% of their work overnight. Mr. Laubach noted that it does not seem, based on the Stone Street experience, that upper management is taking into account the overall impact to the employee, such as mandatory retraining shortly before an employee is eligible for retirement. He also stated that he believes that implementing new technology in one operation can have an impact across several ICs. Mr. Clifford acknowledged that technology implementation is becoming more of an issue and that NIH corporate recognizes that. Retraining and allotting funds for retraining is becoming a much larger issue, and will be as we move forward in time and the number of employees grows and the non-RIF mandate persists. Mr. Laubach suggested that perhaps a committee should be formed or a process be instituted that would ensure the impact on affected employees would be considered. Mr. Clifford suggested that Mr. Leonard Taylor, from NIH ORS, be invited to speak on this issue as a subject matter expert at a future meeting. Mr. Kevin will invite Mr. Taylor to speak at the next meeting.

Miscellaneous:

The guest speaker for the next meeting is scheduled to be Mr. John Riconda from HHS Office of the Secretary, and the topic will be the evolution of Partnership Councils throughout the agency.

A brief discussion ensued concerning the difficulties associated with maintaining a full staff of Police Offices at NIH due the drastic disparity in pay for officers between NIH and other government agencies. The compensation package offered by the Air Marshall program, in particular, is driving up the salaries of federal police offices to the point that NIH is expecting a large shortage of officers in the near future.

Next meeting: Monday, May 20, 2002, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm in Building 31, Room 2C19.